

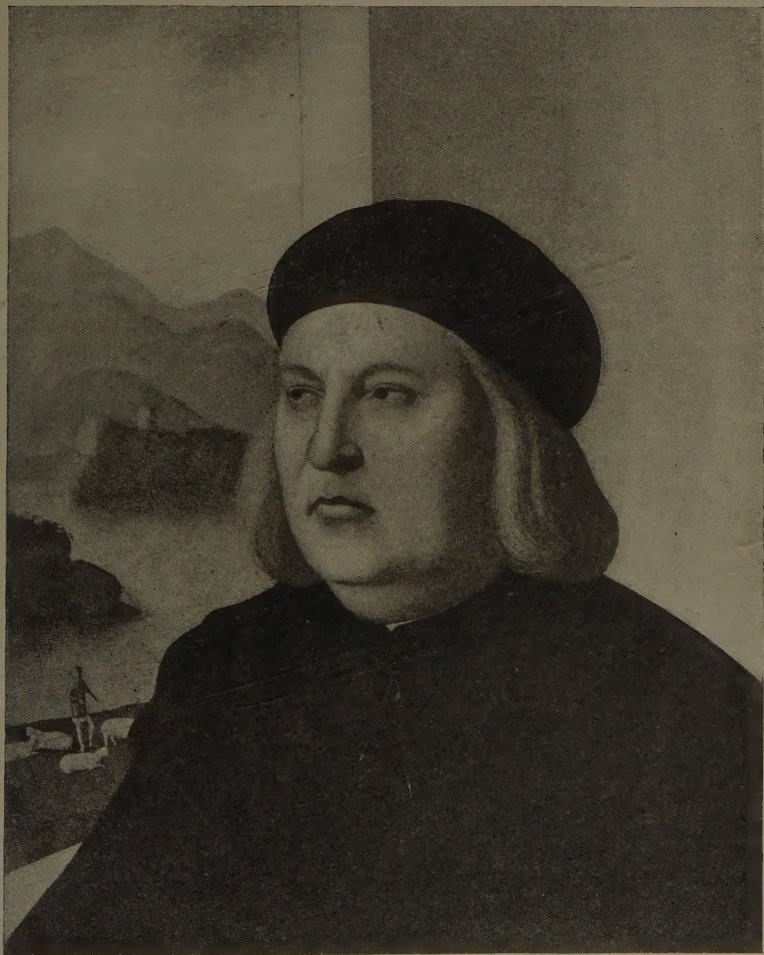
Bulletin of the Rhode Island School of Design

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No. 2



PORTRAIT OF A VENETIAN

By Marco Basaiti, XV-XVI Century

Gift of MR. MANTON B. METCALF

THREE RENAISSANCE PAINTINGS

THE emphasis in the School of Design collections has hitherto been on representative examples of American painting; this is a wise policy and merits continuance. But the Museum has never lost sight of the fact that a certain number of paintings of earlier and more important schools, from a technical, artistic and historic standpoint, was highly desirable. An important gift of three Renaissance paintings from Mr. Manton B. Metcalf is therefore most acceptable, especially when their diversity of subject and treatment is considered.

The first of these is a portrait of a man by Marco Basaiti of the Venetian School. The three-quarter view of the sitter presents a study of character well expressed by the full, well-rounded cheeks, the firm, closed mouth, the partly-closed eyes, and the double chin. His hair falls in long masses to his shoulders, framing the powerful face. Even the scar on the forehead is not omitted. His black robe and close-fitting black cap are in sharp contrast with the treatment of the flesh, and give the picture the necessary accent. The wall of a room fills half of the background to the right, while on the left, through an open window, is seen in the foreground a shepherd with a flock of sheep; beyond is a lake and in the distance rise the Cadore Hills.* The landscape keeps its place in the background but adds much by its delicate coloring to the spirit of the picture, and possibly gives us another clue to the interests of the man portrayed, as not being wholly bound up with commercial matters. The portrait is of a man of affairs, a person whose activity had done much to further the welfare of Venice. The identity of the man is unknown.

*A parallel treatment of background is seen in the portrait of a Venetian nobleman in the collection of Mr. R. H. Benson in London (Ex. of Venetian Art, No. 25) and the portrait of a man in the Vienna Kunst-academie, both of which are by Basaiti.

While the artist is not to be reckoned as among the most important Venetian painters his work is well worthy of consideration. Basaiti was born in Venice in the second half of the fifteenth century, probably of a Dalmatian or an Albanian family. He worked in a number of studios, especially with Alvise Vivarini and Giovanni Bellini, following in turn special mannerisms of each master. While his work is largely portraits and religious subjects his free use of landscape leads us to believe that he was especially interested in depicting nature. Since he was one of the early portrait painters of Venice, his work, especially the panel under consideration, is of importance.

A fellow-worker with Basaiti in the studios mentioned was Andrea Previtali, who was born at Brembate Superiore, a village near Bergamo, in the second half of the fifteenth century. He also called himself Cordeliaghi or Cordella, but did not always sign his works. The example given by Mr. Metcalf represents the figure of the risen Christ stepping out of a great stone sarcophagus, the resurrection banner in one hand and the other raised in blessing. The background is bold and rocky, with a sunset in high contrast with dark masses of clouds. In drawing his figure of Christ, Previtali followed a type already established. The banner is a frequent accessory in Italian treatment of this part of Christ's triumph. It takes the form of a white streamer on which is a red cross, and appears in Italian painting as early as Duccio of Siena.

The third panel has been attributed to Bernardino di Betto, more often known as Pinturicchio (1454-1513). Its subject is the familiar one of the Madonna and Child, three-quarter length, seated and with landscape background. Pinturicchio enjoyed an important position in the Umbrian school of the quattrocento, being foreman for a time of Perugino's studio. There he came to know Raphael Santi. In artistic merit his earlier work shows decidedly more



THE RISEN CHRIST

By Andrea Previtali, XV Century

Gift of MR. MANTON B. METCALF

power of conception and execution than his later work, and he can never be reckoned with the giants of Renaissance painting, but among his contributions to this momentous phase of art expression is the fact, as has been noted by several writers, that he, with Perugino, developed the type of Umbrian Madonna, which is the glory of Raphael's work. In this type the representation of the Madonna is much younger than in the others. There is more spiritual abstraction in the figure, yet she never

fails to be interested in the Child. With Perugino, Pinturicchio and Raphael the element of the divine remains in the Madonna and Child conception. Following that period it becomes more and more human and is subordinated to other interests.

In the example illustrated, the Child is shown holding a red object in his right hand and lifting his left in the usual sign of blessing. It differs from the ordinary type in that although the child is blessing the visitor, its gaze is not directed

towards him, but off to the left. While the panel shows the grace of line and softness of color which is seen in Pinturicchio's work, some of the latter quality is due to the resurfacing it has received at a dealer's hand. This has not detracted, however, from its subtle charm or quiet, dignified beauty. While its Umbrian characteristics are much in evidence, we see in it a work of the school of Pinturicchio rather than of the master himself.

L. E. R.

THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

THE Old Testament story of the handwriting on the wall of the palace of the Assyrian king and its interpretation by Daniel, "Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting," seems to be curiously significant in these days of transition brought about by the great war. There is a feeling that perhaps many of the activities of our day do not justify their existence under the new conditions, and that the above judgment therefore applies to many of them. Parallel with the effort to secure victory over the enemy there has suddenly come into being a revival of emphasis on what is worth while which is truly astonishing. Nations have consecrated themselves to great purposes and ideals, individual soldiers in untold numbers have become introspective and developed greater emphasis on a true religious life, and private citizens begin to recognize the seriousness of life, the benefits of unselfish service, and the spirit of the day which asks of every branch of thought and action, "Is it worth while, and, if so, how can the most be derived from it for the individual and for the nation?" The religious bodies realize that the great questioning of the day means much to them in the future, and those who cannot justify themselves through universal service, must drop behind and sooner or later disappear. As a noted preacher has said, "The

spirit of the times seems to be to increase the fruitfulness of human character in thought and deed."

This sifting out of the grain from the chaff is also increasingly felt in all lines of public and individual service, and the art museums in their turn find it desirable and necessary to show that they and the principles for which they stand, are essentials to be retained, valued and used to the utmost in the present days of strife as well as in the future days of peace. Past are the days when an art museum was purely a "cold storage warehouse of works of art," and long ago the needs of student and public alike were recognized, and provision made for them. The museum today which does not prove its worth must either change or be discarded.

We feel the heritage of the past in literature, religion, art and science. We do not care to make the mistakes which others have made nor to ignore the satisfactory results of the achievements of others. We are suddenly coming to see that a true sense and appreciation of the beautiful is a vital and necessary part of our life. We know that superior quality and high standards of art are a part of the universal language of beauty, irrespective of the country or age which called them forth, so that the art museum of the future will be less and less national and increasingly universal in expression. It will emphasize the educational function in ways and to a degree not at present realized. It will not be satisfied until it belongs to every individual in the great public, it will seek to prove that the element of beauty can and should enter into every phase of life, it will ever be a leader in the dissemination of art as a universal language, and it will take cognizance of the new spirit of the times, glorying in the opportunities presented, and meriting universal support.

It has been the experience of most art museums that a faithful few individuals put their best efforts into supporting all the functions of the institution, and



MADONNA AND CHILD

School of Pinturicchio XVI Century

Gift of MR. MANTON B. METCALF



MADONNA AND CHILD, Alto-Relief in Wood

Umbrian School, Italy, XV Century

Given to the Museum in 1917

the small, number thus interested have often been a cause for discouragement. Yet we remember that the art museum of today is the development of not much over forty years, during which it has given proof of its inherent value. The lesson of the day is that the awakening of nations to things worth while in life is going to mean that the museums that are meeting the needs of the hour will receive support and appreciation from the many instead of the few. To them it will be a pleasure as well as a duty to emphasize beauty in all expressions of life.

If the spirit of the future is to be "to increase the fruitfulness of human character in thought and deed," then the art museums will surely play their important part in the refinement of taste, the emphasis on beauty, and the removal of much trash from our lives and surroundings, and will show that art appreciation may become a moulder of character.

The message on the wall for the world today seems to mean that the individual can no longer ignore his responsibility to his finer self and to his fellow-men, and that he must discard the trivial and "hold fast to that which is good." He must therefore look about him for the proper channels of expression, and one of them is decidedly the art museum. This has proved its worth when it has adhered to the highest ideals, and merits all encouragement and universal support when it plans for larger service in the days before us.

UMBRIAN MADONNA AND CHILD

THE Museum purchased at the Volpisaie in 1917 a fifteenth century group in alto-relief of the Madonna and Child. It is of Umbrian workmanship, full of simple dignity and charm. The group is in polychrome, the dress of the Madonna being in red and gold with

scroll pattern, while that of the Christ child is varicolored and gilded. The garments of both show blue linings. Following the usual features of such Italian sculpture of the Renaissance, there is no indication of classical standards, but rather a direct representation of mother and child. While it can be attributed only to the Umbrian school, the group possesses the intimate expression, the handling of planes, the grace of composition and line and the religious dignity which made the fifteenth century so important.

ETCHED PORTRAITS

BY ANTHONY VAN DYCK

THE Rhode Island School of Design has recently acquired a fine impression of the second state of the etched portrait of Jodocus de Momper by Anthony Van Dyck. Etching was but a small phase of Van Dyck's activity, only twenty-one examples in all being attributed to him, nineteen of which are portraits; but no one, with the single exception of Rembrandt, and he only infrequently, has surpassed Van Dyck in the purity and force of his style, or in the straightforward characterization and simplicity of his etched portraits. No less charming than his oil portraits, they are more vigorous in their handling and more manly in their effect. With a few bold strokes, and with an unerring elimination of unessentials, Van Dyck concentrated on the salient features of his sitters, and by a cleverness of selection gave a characterization that reveals much of their personality.

In the etching of De Momper these essential features of Van Dyck's treatment are readily felt. The concentration is admirably focused on the head by the summary yet structural treatment of both the body and setting. The head is the only part at all carefully modelled, but with such restraint that not a line or



PORTRAIT OF JODOCUS DE MOMPER
Recent Gift

By Anthony Van Dyck

dot could be removed without destroying the quality of the whole. The bony structure of the skull is perfectly felt under the skin, while the wrinkles of the forehead and the flabbiness of the cheeks are suggested with a mastery of touch that is almost startling. Yet there is no undue emphasis or vulgar realism about these details. They are a part of the man, and so had to be etched; but they are merely hinted at, and we are conscious of them only as we would be conscious of them in the living man. By these carefully selected suggestions of external characteristics Van Dyck has given us

more than the mere outward appearance, we have the very character of the man. Quick and vigorous in thought and action, easily stirred to anger, but with a readiness of wit that soon sees the humorous side of a situation, such is the reading of De Momper's character from this vital etching by Van Dyck.

Jodocus de Momper was a landscape and marine painter and an etcher of average merit. He was born in Antwerp in 1564, and died in 1634, only a few years after this portrait was executed. His paintings are to be seen in many European galleries, especially in Dresden and Madrid.

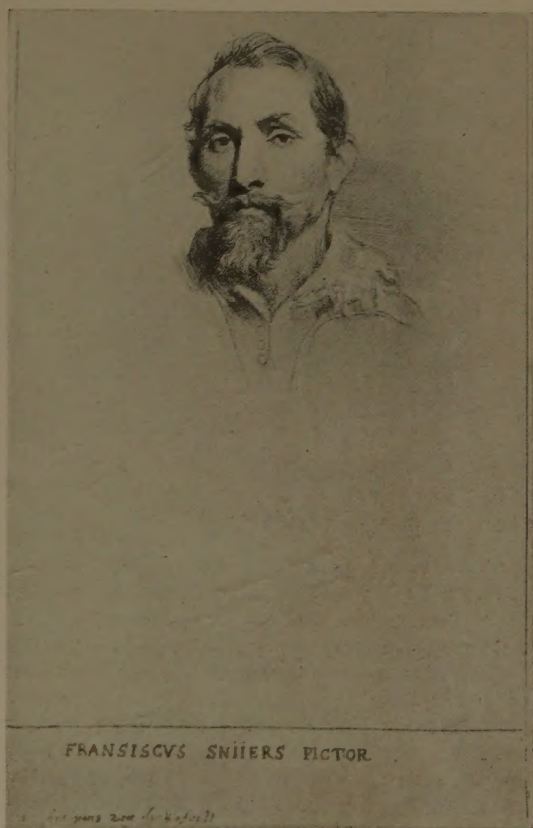
The impression under discussion is from the Gillis Hendrix edition (1645) of Van Dyck's famous "Iconography." This edition was the second to be issued, the first having been published at intervals by Martin van den Enden during the years from 1626 until after

1636. The first edition, however, did not contain the Jodocus de Momper, nor in fact any of the fifteen absolutely authenticated portrait etchings by Van Dyck, although they had undoubtedly been executed during the time when Van den Enden's edition was published. This folio included only eighty portraits, all but three being by other engravers working from oil grisaille panels that Van Dyck had made as models. The attribution of these three etchings to Van Dyck has been questioned by the latest authority on the subject, Arthur M. Hind, and so they need not detain us here.

In the Hendrix edition of 1645, which contained 101 portraits, the fifteen authentic etched portraits by Van Dyck occur, although in various degrees of reworking by engravers. Five remained untouched, and the De Momper in the Museum Collection is one of these; five had only a background added; while the rest were either in part or entirely reworked by an engraver. The Frans Snyders, of which the Museum owns a fine impression of the first state, before the reworking, was one of the subjects so treated.

The De Momper in the Museum is an impression of the first published state, although an earlier state without the lettering or Hendrix's monogram exists. These first states are either artist's proofs or were printed by Van Dyck and presented as gifts to friends. As few of these impressions were pulled off the press, the plates were still in excellent condition when they passed into Hendrix's hands, and have, (those that were untouched by the engraver, at least) all the bloom and freshness of the unpublished impressions.

The first states of these portraits have, of course, become extremely rare, so that we are also very fortunate in possessing the splendid first state of the Frans Snyders, which is considered by many critics to be Van Dyck's greatest etched portrait. This is from the Isaac C. Bates collection. Only the head has been executed, but the perfect placing leaves nothing to be desired, and the imagination readily supplies the missing body. The subtlety of the placing of



PORTRAIT OF FRANS SNYDERS¹

By Anthony Van Dyck

Bequest of ISAAC C. BATES, 1913

the head on the plate may be immediately realized if comparison is made between this impression showing Van Dyck's intention, with a reproduction printed with the head in the center of the paper. How much of the charm is lost by this mere shifting of a few inches! It can be compared in this respect only to an oriental work.

These two etchings give one an admirable opportunity to study at first hand the style and technique of one of the greatest portrait etchers that the world has produced.

H. F. S.



SILVER TEA-SET

American, XVIII Century

Gift of MRS. GEORGE W. PRENTICE

GIFT OF EARLY AMERICAN SILVER

ABOUT the year 1790 Mrs. Sally Snow Barrett of Boston placed an order with a silversmith, who was a master of his trade, for a silver tea-set. Following the custom of the day she had saved her silver half dollars and dollars until she had sufficient metal to make the set. This was a necessary measure, for few if any of the silversmiths of the day kept bullion in stock or had finished silver for sale. The maker's name is unknown, but apparently he was a member of the Boston group which was responsible for so much fine silver. The set was given by Mrs. Barrett to her daughter, Deborah Willard, in 1812 as a wedding present, and her initials were engraved on the proper panel in the design. The three principal pieces were left to the latter's son, Mr. George W. Prentice of Providence, and have been given to the Rhode Island School of Design by Mrs. Prentice, in the name of her husband.

The silver of the latter part of the 18th century reflected the tendency of the period to emphasize refinement of line and shape. In it may be found a reflection of the classic spirit of the Adam brothers and the emphasis of form over ornament of Hepplewhite design. It

also expressed the all-round development of the silversmith, since he performed all the work on his silver, even to the chasing and engraving.

The three pieces which are illustrated compare favorably with the best work of the period, especially in the quality of surface, the graceful shape, the study of proportions, and the severe and refined engraved decoration. The line of the handles, the ball-feet and the pineapple top all contribute to the interest and high quality of the silver.

It is a matter of congratulation that such fine examples should find a permanent home in a public museum of art, for in this way they serve as models to silversmiths of the present and future, and reveal to our visitors the superior standards of early American tableware. The School of Design is especially glad to add these pieces to its growing collection of American silver, as this beautiful art has enjoyed a special distinction in Rhode Island since its early Colonial days.

L. E. R.

ACCESSIONS TO THE LIBRARY

The following books are among those added during the past quarter:

Ashdown, C.H.—Arms and Armour.
n.d.

- Ashdown, Mrs. C. H.— British costume during XIX centuries. n.d.
- Barnett, L. D.— Antiquities of India. 1914.
- Begni, Ernesto, ed.— The Vatican. 1914.
- Bissing, F. W. von, ed.— Denkmäler Ägyptischer Sculptur. 13 pts. 1906–1914.
- Gélis-Didot, P. & Laffillée, H.— La peinture decorative en France. 2v. n.d.
- Huish, M. B.— Greek terra-cotta statuettes. 1900.
- Huish, M. B.— Japan and its art. 1912.
- Laufer, Berthold — Chinese clay figures: prolegomena on the history of defensive armor. Pt. 1. 1914.
- Laufer, Berthold — Jade: a study in Chinese archaeology and religion. 1912.
- Rayet, Olivier, ed.— Monuments de l'art antique. 1884.

EXHIBITIONS FROM JANUARY 1 TO APRIL 1, 1918

January 1–January 30

- (1) Sculpture by Albert Henry Atkins
- (2) Wood Engravings by Henry Wolf

January 15–January 26

Batik work by Mrs. L. M. Sommer, New York

January 29–February 25

Contemporary War Posters

February 6–February 28

Contemporary Applied Art

February 6–March 11

Primitive American Art

February 26–March 14

War Savings Stamp Poster Competition

March 12–April 12

- (1) Paintings by Daniel Garber, W. L. Lathrop, Robert Spencer
- (2) Italian, Flemish and Spanish paintings of XII–XVII century

LECTURES GIVEN IN DOCENT SERVICE FOR SEASON

Dec.	2	L. Earle Rowe	The Armor of Old Japan
	9	Sydney Burleigh	Pennell War Lithographs
	16	John Shapley	Byzantine Painting
	30	L. Earle Rowe	The Paintings of Alexander H. Wyant
Jan.	6	Edmund A. Gurry	How Paintings are Designed
	13	R. D. Hollington	The Soul of Art
	20	A. W. Heintzelman	The Making of Etchings
	27	John Francis Green	Warfare of Light and Darkness
Feb.	3	K. K. Smith	Two Ways of Writing History
	10	L. Earle Rowe	Primitive American Art
	17	Wm. C. Drury	The Painting of the Sea
	24	Wm. Carey Poland	The Spirit of Greek Art
Mar.	3	H. Anthony Dyer	The Development of Landscape Painting
	10	George H. Chase	Greek Vases
	17	Edward W. Forbes	Italian Painting
	24	Raymond Wyer	Art and Fundamentals

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Providence*

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Annual Members, who pay annual dues of \$3.00

ADMISSIONS.

HOURS OF OPENING.—The galleries are open to the public on every day of the year, with the exception of Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and the Fourth of July. From July 1st to September 15th the hours are from 1 to 5 P. M. on week days and from 2 to 5 P. M. Sundays; from September 15th to July 1st the hours are from 10 A. M. to 5 P. M. week days and

from 2 to 5 P. M. Sundays. The Pendleton Collection is open from 2 to 5 P. M. daily.

Twenty-five cents admission to the museum is charged on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and the museum is free on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Free transferable tickets admitting four persons on pay-days are sent to all members of the corporation. Art students and artists, on application to the authorities, may obtain free tickets of admission for any pay-day. Teachers with pupils of both public and private schools will be admitted without payment upon application.

PHOTOGRAPHS ON SALE.

Photographic copies of many of the objects belonging to the museum, including photographs of the Pendleton Collection of furniture, are on sale at the entrance to the museum.

PUBLICATIONS.

Four quarterly bulletins are issued and are sent free of charge to the members, and, on written request, to alumni of the institution.

The year-book of the school containing detailed information regarding its many activities, and presenting conditions of admission and a list of the courses given in its several departments, will be forwarded free of charge to prospective students and others who are interested in the institution and its work.

COPYING.

Permission to copy or photograph in the galleries of the museum may be obtained in the office. Such permits will not be issued for Sundays or legal holidays.

LIBRARY.

The Library contains 3,585 volumes, 16,157 mounted photographs and reproductions, 2,808 lantern slides, and about 3,250 postcards. During the months of June, July and August the library is closed.

Bulletin of the
Museum, Rhode Island
School of Design 1919-01:
Vol 7

NOTICE

THIS VOLUME IS INCOMPLETE

**THE FOLLOWING ISSUES ARE NOT
AVAILABLE:**

Vol. 6 no. 3-4- 1918

OUT OF PRINT

BINDING UNIT

